



ALERT

News from the UFMCC on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment.

**Rev. Troy Perry Reports On
AIDS in Argentina**

JULY, 1990

Editor: Rev. Dr. Stephen Pieters

UFMCC Founder and Moderator, Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, visited MCC in Buenos Aires, Argentina, May 4-14, and returned with a passionate concern for the plight of people with AIDS in Argentina.

HIV is spreading at an alarming rate. Women are becoming infected through unsterilized instruments during gynecological exams. Education to prevent the spread of HIV is practically nonexistent. Needles and medical instruments are routinely used over and over without sterilization.

HIV infection is rampant among the poor; tuberculosis is epidemic, as well as an insect bite fever. The needles for treatment of these and other illnesses are used repeatedly, and thus, HIV is spread through the treatment of other diseases.

During his visit, Rev. Perry met with the President of the Human Rights Organization, a Disciples of Christ Pastor. The organization persuaded the police to test juvenile delinquents age 8-14 for HIV infection. Fifty-two percent tested positive.

The government-run hospitals do not screen blood. Argentina has socialized medicine, and with the government bankrupt, AIDS treatment is not funded. There are only three hospitals in Argentina with AIDS wards, and they are all in Buenos Aires. Anyone who is HIV+ is not admitted to any other hospital in the country.

AIDS wards typically have trash all over them, because hospital personnel won't go in the wards. Most doctors and nurses are even afraid of entering the AIDS wards. No surgeon in the country will operate on a person with HIV. Only one hospital will remove teeth for HIV-positive people. The government will not pay for AZT or aerosolized pentamidine. As a result of all of these problems, life expectancy for the HIV population is extremely short.

Prisoners who test HIV+ are kept in jail, even if they are due for parole, until they die. Anyone arrested who is HIV+ is never tried, for the trial is put off until after their death. These methods provide the government with an unofficial quarantine procedure.

The pastor of MCC, Roberto Gonzales, is the first spiritual leader known to be gay in Argentina. Besides serving on the Board of the only AIDS agency not run by

the government, he is a chaplain in a private hospital which treats people with AIDS. Perry reports, "Roberto provides the only positive spiritual approach available."

The impact of HIV on MCC Buenos Aires has been enormous. One member told Rev. Perry that most of his friends are among "The Disappeared." Lesbians and Gay men were among the first to "disappear" in an earlier regime. Now many others are disappearing because of AIDS.

MCC is on the forefront of AIDS service, actively participating in the one agency not organized by the government. Rev. Perry visited with Dr. Israel Stolovitzky, the President of the A.M.C.E.S. (Association Multidisciplinaria Contra El Sida). Stolovitzky, an Argentine of Polish descent, is known as the "Kinsey of Argentina," having written books and edited a professional journal on sexuality. The agency opened in December of 1989, with MCC contributing the largest amount of start-up funds (\$100). A member of the Buenos Aires Church, Susanna, and the pastor, Roberto Gonzales, both sit on the Board of the A.M.C.E.S.

One member of MCC who volunteered to work in a hospital AIDS ward was sent to a psychiatrist for being suicidal. Another member, the pastor's roommate, was the first person on Argentinian TV to be openly identified as a person with AIDS. While Roberto was at General Conference, this roommate was tied to a chair in their apartment and murdered, his throat cut and his body stabbed repeatedly.

"Our brothers and sisters are making a difference in the AIDS crisis in Argentina," Perry told ALERT. The pastor's positive influence is complemented by many members' active participation in AIDS ministry. The church is very grateful to Church of the Holy Spirit MCC in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, USA, for paying their pastor's salary (\$100 a month). Fort Lauderdale has also sent a thousand condoms with church messages on the packaging. Since most people in Argentina cannot afford condoms, they were gone in one weekend.

Rev. Elder Perry would like to see more churches around the world get involved in helping MCC Buenos Aires face AIDS in Argentina. They are looking for videos about

(Continued next page)

AIDS In Argentina (Cont'd)

AIDS in Spanish, but they must be transferred to cassettes designed for their system. This procedure costs \$125, and is another way that churches throughout the Fellowship can contribute to the struggle in Argentina. Churches can send condoms, educational material in Spanish, and money to help the church meet the needs of their PWA's.

Perry urged that some church or churches sponsor a visit to Buenos Aires from the UFMCC Field Director for AIDS Ministry. "They were real anxious to have someone from UFMCC come with expertise in AIDS; they need someone like Rev. Steve Pieters in Argentina. His pamphlet, "Spiritual Strength for Survival", was the first thing available in Spanish on spirituality and AIDS in the country. "I brought 1000 copies with me, and they were gone right away. They are real anxious to meet Rev. Pieters. They desperately need the hope," said Perry.

Pieters Featured In New AIDS Play

The Rev. Dr. Steve Pieters, Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry, is appearing in an original docudrama by Artists Confronting AIDS, AIDS/US II, featuring the real life stories of eleven individuals transformed by HIV. The Los Angeles Times called the production, "shattering...buoyant...life enhancing...it sure beats a revival of As Is or The Normal Heart... AIDS/US II serves us all."

AIDS/US II is inspired by AIDS/US, originally produced in 1986, which garnered international attention for its revolutionary depiction of the health crisis.

AIDS/US II presents testimony from a culturally diverse group of men and women, representing HIV's impact on humanity. Telling their stories are Helenclaire Cox, a mother who lost her adult son to AIDS; Andy Escajeda, a Hispanic PWA who lives with Cox and her husband; Andrea Skoff, a young woman who tested positive after an affair with an IV drug user; Tonly Gramaglia, a young gay man who tested positive in 1986 but remains asymptomatic; Aiden Avila and Shevawn Blocker, a Black couple who lost their 8-year-old son as a result of a blood transfusion; Marge Martin, the mother of two teenage boys who tested positive after learning her bisexual boyfriend was dying of AIDS; Alison Arnglim, a television actress who played Nellie Oleson on "Little House on the Prairie" and is currently a local AIDS activist; Myron Cuthbertson, a young Black gay Catholic lay minister who almost died of AIDS-related septic infection in April of this year; Tony Apodaca, a PWA who walked out of the Chris Brownlee Hospice, refusing to believe his dementia diagnosis; and Pieters, a long-term survivor.

Compiled by James Carroll Pickett from personal interviews with the cast and directed by Michael Kearns, AIDS/US II opened June 3 in Hollywood, and will be presented every Sunday in July and August in Los Angeles, and Santa Monica, CA. For those interested in further information and reservations call Artists Confronting AIDS at (213) 856-8943.

Field Director Available After Mid-November

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Pieters is available for speaking and preaching engagements beginning in Mid-November. Pieters, a long-term survivor of AIDS, has brought his message of hope and healing to over 100 MCC's in four countries, as well as to numerous conferences, schools, and fundraising events.

Pieters is renowned for his high-energy preaching style, his articulation of gay pride, his fairy wand, and his inspiring workshops on long-term survival, ministering to PWA's, and doing good grief work.

If you would like Rev. Steve Pieters to bring his inspiring message and presence to your area church or organization, contact him at UFMCC Headquarters, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; (213) 464-5100.

AIDS Memorial Service

*Sermon by Rev. Shelley Hamilton,
Pastor, Vieux Carre' MCC, New Orleans, LA
(preached at Woldenberg Park, New Orleans,
LA before over 1,000 people, May 20, 1990)*

We gather here this evening to lift up the names of our people...men, women, children...people of all ages and races who have died and who are still living with this disease we call AIDS. We gather to remember. We gather for solidarity and support. We gather that a society corrupted by denial might not force us to grieve alone - in secret - in the closet. We gather so people all over the world who are suffering in one way or another because of this disease will know and understand that they, that we are not alone. We gather to offer assurance...no, we gather to offer passionate certainty that we have nothing to be ashamed of, no reason to hide. No - not ever again.

What we are doing here tonite is incredibly powerful. It's also historic. The Gay and Lesbian people, and our friends and families in New Orleans, have taken this memorial service out of the hands of people who want to exclude us and condemn us. We have said we will remember and honor our dead and our living with truth and with dignity. Here - tonite - we're not afraid or ashamed to say Lesbian and Gay.

It's important, individually and cosmically, that we publicly celebrate, bless, honor and remember those who died...and those who cared for them while they lived. This ceremony empowers all of us into freedom and hope. Tonite we begin a new era.

It's urgent that Gay and Lesbian people, our families and friends learn to trust - to know that we have nothing to hide or be ashamed of. Our lives and our expressions of love are a gift of grace. A gift of life. A gift from God. It is our right to be who we are. It is our right to live love and die with dignity. Tonite we offer hope to all who care to receive it. We are a people that understands hope is essential to life. And we are a people that also understands action creates hope. We cannot live in this world any longer experiencing and accepting injustice, lies and oppression. We cannot and will not keep the silence any longer.

It's very important that we acknowledge our world has been built on a foundation of denial, half-truths and oppression. It's important to grasp that when the AIDS virus came among us reality shifted forever. Our world, our lives and the lives of those to come after us will never be the same. What we do with this understanding will shape the direction of history. What we do with this knowledge will determine the quality of life on this planet for hundreds of years after we've gone.

Our people...the ones we remember tonite must not die in vain. You and I must give purpose to their deaths - indeed to their lives.

We must not allow the governments of our country - state or cities to lie to us about the magnitude of this crisis. We must not allow or accept inadequate medical care. And medical care for most is inadequate. In the world of AIDS the middle class very quickly become poor. The people - you and I - have to demand justice. We must shatter the myths and bring reality into focus. People like Jesse Helms must be taught to understand that AIDS is not a disease of restricted groups of people. It is essential to say over and over again that AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease to which men, women and children of all races, classes, cultures and sexual orientations are susceptible and vulnerable. This is a disease that has the potential to destroy the human race. We cannot allow fear, ignorance and denial to divert us from the certain knowledge that thousands of people are sick and dying. That hundreds of thousands more are infected and will soon be sick and dying. We cannot shut down our minds or refuse to hear what is being said to us. We must hold our elected leadership accountable. We can bring dignity and hope into this tragedy.

Through January 1990 in the United States alone there was approximately 121,000 cases of AIDS reported - of that number nearly 65,000 were white men - 27,000 were black men - 17,000 Hispanic men - 700 Asian men - 132 Native American men - and nearly 12,000 women - most of whom are black and Hispanic. As of May 1 there were 1,842 AIDS cases reported in Louisiana: 1,195 of which were in the 7

parish New Orleans area - there have been 1,165 deaths in Louisiana attributed to AIDS. Did you know that people in Louisiana with AIDS die quicker than anywhere else in this country. These figures reflect people, human beings - not sexual orientation and they don't even include the children. 1 in 77 births in New York City last year were to an HIV infected mother. Charity Hospital is home to many, many HIV infected babies.

This is a global crisis. Make no mistake about it. There will not be a single family, town, city, state, country which will escape this disease. I believe it's important that we name this - simply cut through the shadows of denial and say it like it is. We are a country being ripped apart by violence, drugs, poverty and a deep sense of culture despair. We are a country divided by gender, race, class, culture and sexual orientation. A country that uses bombs as symbols of power and greatness. A country that uses it's wealth of resources to separate and oppress people.

It's so very important that we understand that hundreds of thousands of people are suffering and dying without adequate medical care because billions of dollars are being used to maintain a war machine. And necessary that we see the relationship between illicit drugs and the pandemic nature of AIDS. And even more urgent that we address the brokenness, and dysfunctions within our society which make us the most drug consuming and addictive society in the world.

It is essential that we start asking questions...why do so many people in our country take drugs? Why do we put people in prison and kill them when they're sick and in physical and spiritual pain. Why is our society being destroyed by violence and hatred? Why do people have to suffer abuse, disgrace, dinigration in order to see a doctor or receive medication? Why is it that \$1.6 billion is being spent this next year on AIDS care and triple or more that amount being spent on the military establishment?

Why, in Louisiana, is the state government allocating only \$875,000.00 for AIDS care? Do you have any idea how quickly that will disappear?

We are a country that maintains its power comes from the people. We are the people. It is time for us to claim our power. Time for our voices to be heard.

I'm a pastor and these past years I've walked this AIDS journey with many different people. I've seen great beauty. I've felt - seen horror beyond belief. I've watched people die with peace and dignity. I've watched people die in terror, in anger, in shame. I've seen years of fragmentation healed as families learn to love anew in the midst of this terrible disease. I've learned so much about living and loving from those who are dying. I watch people learning to know each other in the vulnerability of death as we were never able to in life.

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AIDS Memorial Service (Cont'd)

I do not understand this tragedy and every single day I cry out to God - How long O God! How long? And yet in my despair and fatigue I see grace and wonder and hope in the midst of all this devastation.

AIDS has brought our people together and given new meaning and power to the word community. The world has used this tragedy in an effort to destroy us. And we have turned this tragedy into victory. Our victory is only beginning. We are a people of gentleness and hope. We are also a people filled with the spirit and courage of truth and freedom.

In this time of deep sorrow and seemingly never ending grief we have grown to trust in our vision of who we are. There's an ancient Hebrew scripture which speaks of former things passing away and God's promise to make all things new. I believe that you and I are bearing witness to things being made new.

I told my congregation last Sunday that we are a part of a new community - a new people - the rainbow people. It's no accident the symbol for Lesbian and Gay liberation is a rainbow flag. The rainbow people - you and I - are the people leading the world into the 21st century - a century of peace and hope. The rainbow people. Yes - we're claiming our power - our identity as a culture - a people. And we invite the world into the hope of this new age.

And let us never forget those we are here remembering tonight. Let us remember them each day of our lives. Let us remember them at church - in the temple - at Rainbow gatherings of pride and celebration. Remember them in bars - on our jobs. Let us call out their names at Mardi Gras Balls and during St. Patrick Day Parades - wherever we are - wherever we go. When we speak a person's name we remember and honor them. It's important that not a single person die in vain or be forgotten.

It is the lives of those we remember who empower the struggle and the hope for freedom, truth, justice in our world. And we must never allow the world to forget. We must be an on-going living memorial...even for those we can't name...for the babies...for the children...the drug user...the homeless. An ongoing living memorial and a testament that we will not live in this world any longer accepting the tyranny of the church or the state.

We will no longer keep silent or inactive in the face of evil - the face of injustice, lies and oppression. We are a people who are claiming our power. Once we were not a people. And now we are a Holy people. A people of hope. A people of many colors.

Let us always remember. In remembering we honor. And in honoring we call forth New Life. Hallelujah and Amen.

Please support the UFMCC AIDS Ministry.
Enclosed is an envelope for your
convenience. Thank you!

In Memoriam: Rev. Brad Anderson

6/8/58 - 6/6/90

*(Pastor of First MCC West Hollywood
and MCC Silverlake)*

The man whom we know as the Reverend Bradley Christopher Anderson, was born on January 8, 1958, in Albuquerque, NM to Elwanda and Anthony Sandoval. Eight days later, he was christened "Christopher Wayne Sandoval" in the Catholic Church. In January of 1962, his mother having remarried, he was adopted by his stepfather, Gerald Lowrie, and received the name "Christopher Wayne Lowrie," a name by which he would be known for over twenty years.

In January, 1979, Christopher began attending MCC of the Ozarks in Fayetteville, AR. It was here he met his training pastor, Reverend Sam Edelman. During his years at MCC of the Ozarks, he served as a Board of Directors member and as Student Clergy. It was during this time that he met Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry at a spiritual renewal in Tulsa, OK, beginning a lifelong friendship which meant very much to him.

On June 16, 1983, in recognition that he would be living a very different life than he had envisioned, Christopher Wayne Lowrie changed his name to "Bradley Christopher Anderson." In July of 1983, he relocated to Los Angeles at the encouragement of Rev. Perry to pursue ministry opportunities on the West Coast. On August 3, 1983, Brad met his life-partner, Mr. Robert Byrnes. Bob and Brad celebrated their Holy Union on August 23, 1986.

It was during the summer of 1983 that Brad began attending the First MCC of West Hollywood, where he began his association with Reverend Willie Smith, who pastored the Church at that time. Brad began serving as Student Clergy shortly thereafter, and was licensed as clergy in the UFMCC in May of 1984. Brad was approved for ordination at the General Conference in St. Paul, MN in July of 1989.

Rev. Anderson served as Assistant Pastor of First MCC of West Hollywood from 1984-1986, when he was elected Pastor by the congregation and approved by the District Coordinator. Brad served as both full-time and part-time pastor of the Church; it was under his leadership that the congregation decided to relocate to the Silverlake area of Los Angeles and change its name to "MCC Silverlake."

Rev. Anderson was active in community work outside of the local church, including tenure as Spiritual Advisor of AIDS Project Los Angeles; he also served on Fellowship advisory panels and was a guest speaker at various meetings and forums. Since April of 1989 Brad had been living with AIDS and continued to Pastor MCC Silverlake.

On the morning of June 6, 1990, Brad went home to be with Jesus. We know that Brad will always be with us in Spirit and in love, however we will miss his wonderful laughter around us.